

*Department
of
Human Services*

Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, September 2, 2005

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*Prepared by the
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Communications
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Granholm gets child safety bills

Legislature tightens rules that keeps sex offenders away from schools, day care centers.

*Associated Press
Detroit News
Friday, September 2, 2005*

LANSING -- Legislation aimed at safeguarding children from sex offenders near schools and day care centers is headed to Gov. Jennifer Granholm's desk.

State legislators on Wednesday overwhelmingly signed off on a number of bills, including one that would bar registered sex offenders from living, working or loitering within 1,000 feet of a school. The ban wouldn't apply to certain youth offenders and those already living or working near schools.

Granholm, who called for similar measures in a May letter to lawmakers, is expected to sign the multi-bill package.

"Michigan will not rest until we have done everything we can to keep the 'bad guys' away from our children," the governor said in a statement.

Besides establishing zones around schools, the legislation would require background checks on all school and day care employees -- not just teachers and administrators -- revoke the teaching certification for sex offenders and penalize those employees who don't report crimes in their pasts.

One bill would stiffen penalties for sex offenders who don't report information to law enforcement. Another would allow evidence of alleged prior sex crimes to be admissible in court cases in which a defendant is accused of a sex crime against someone under age 18.

State auditors released a report last year finding that 222 licensed school workers, mostly teachers, had criminal records.

The Senate on Wednesday unanimously approved bills previously passed by the House. The House voted overwhelmingly to endorse Senate-approved bills, with Republican Rep. Leon Drolet of Clinton Township voting against two bills.

"Our children deserve to be safe while they're learning at school," said Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, who sponsored the measure creating a 1,000-foot safety zone.

While lawmakers were nearly unanimous in their support for the legislation, the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan expressed concern with the 1,000-foot rule. Shelli Weisberg, an ACLU lobbyist, said the state's sex offender registry doesn't distinguish between truly harmful predators and those on the list who had consensual sex with peers under age 16.

Gardeners respond to the call for food

September 2, 2005

BY MARTY HAIR
FREE PRESS GARDEN WRITER

Reflecting the region's dire economic situation, the need for emergency food for Michigan families is up 30% or more this year, according to officials at agencies that collect and distribute food to the hungry.

One food pantry in South Lyon reports a 40% jump in the amount of food being distributed to people seeking assistance compared to distribution last year, according to Augie Fernandes, president and chief executive officer of Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan.

"That's quite a startling number. We see it throughout the state," Fernandes said this week. And he worries that, as national attention focuses on relief for victims of Hurricane Katrina, the need for food locally won't seem as crucial and donations will drop. That often happens after a tragedy elsewhere, he said.

Like other emergency food providers, Gleaners encourages gardeners to donate extra produce as they harvest a season's vegetables, fruits and herbs. The Detroit-based agency works with 440 food pantries and soup kitchens in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Livingston, Washtenaw and Monroe counties.

Michigan's 7% unemployment rate during July was the nation's highest, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"People have run out of benefits and have not been able to find another job. They desperately need the food to help their families survive," said Sue Sherbow, deputy director of Forgotten Harvest of Southfield.

On their lunch hour Tuesday, Paul Hudak and Sherry Huntley dropped off a sack of extra vegetables from their garden for the Plant a Row for the Hungry program. Produce may be put in bins at any English Gardens store. From there, Forgotten Harvest collects and distributes it within 24 hours to 110 feeding agencies in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.

For Hudak and Huntley, sharing extra food from their garden with those who need it is "the right thing to do," according to Hudak.

"You just walk right in the store and put your produce in the bin and off you go," says Hudak, 38. "I think once other people find out how easy it is to take their extra produce in, a lot more people will do it."

In South Lyon, Nancy Avey was at the Active Faith Community Services office on Wednesday seeking, for the first time, emergency food.

"For the past few months, my husband hasn't been getting 40 hours" at his job in shipping and receiving, said Avey. The South Lyon couple has three youngsters, who are beginning

kindergarten, second grade and middle school. Nancy Avey stays at home with the children; she said the family can't afford day care.

"We just fell farther and farther behind. When my kids go in the cupboard and say, 'What's for lunch?' or, 'What's for dinner,' there really aren't many choices in there. I had to do something," she said.

Fernandes said rising fuel and other costs are especially hard on those with fixed or lower incomes and further intensify the need for emergency food. That includes people with incomes above the federal poverty level -- \$19,157 for a family of four -- but without enough money for food each month.

With 33.6% of residents of Detroit below the federal poverty level in 2004, the city is now the poorest city of 250,000 or more in the United States, according to figures the U.S. Census Bureau released this week.

For Hudak, an automotive designer, and Huntley, 39, who works in retail purchasing, the Plant a Row for the Hungry program means they have somewhere besides family and friends to take their extra vegetables.

"With a program like this, you can take a few minutes here and there and hopefully make a difference in someone's life," Hudak explained in an e-mail.

Sherbow said the program especially appeals to home gardeners, who typically plant and harvest more than their families can eat.

"This is a great avenue for people not only to grow as much as they want but to make sure it's going to a very good use," Sherbow said. Last year, southeast Michigan gardeners donated more than 20,000 pounds of food to Plant a Row. Forgotten Harvest collected another 190,000 pounds of fresh produce from farmers, Sherbow said.

Contact **MARTY HAIR** at 313-222-2005 or hair@freepress.com.

BRIAN DICKERSON: Save the kids? Oh, spare me

August 31, 2005

BY BRIAN DICKERSON
FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

Children are a blessing. But until they're old enough to host fund-raising parties and write checks to political action committees, they're of limited use to most politicians.

So adult antennae should go up whenever our elected representatives in Lansing talk about doing more to protect children, because such talk is often a cover for protecting some less telegenic, more appreciative constituency.

Take, for example, the state Legislature's initiative to ban direct sales of wine, which could come to a vote in the Michigan House as early as today.

Michigan residents have been able to order wine shipped to their homes for about 30 years, so long as they ordered it from one of our state's 43 wineries.

To buy wine manufactured somewhere else, residents either had to visit the winery in person or purchase from an authorized retailer in Michigan.

Wholesale politics

Then, last May, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a Michigan law prohibiting direct shipments from wineries outside the state violated the commerce clause of the Constitution.

Ever since, many Michigan state legislators have been worried sick that Michigan children would seize the opportunity to start buying wine via the Internet -- an anxiety that apparently never occurred to them as long as the only wine available for direct shipment was bottled in Michigan.

By June, more than half of the state House's 110 members had signed up to cosponsor House Majority Leader Chris Ward's bill banning all direct wine shipments in Michigan. Across the rotunda, a like proportion of state senators are backing a similar bill.

Many of these legislators have children, and I'm sure it's just a coincidence that most have also received generous financial support from the Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association, whose monopoly on out-of-state wine sales would be threatened if the direct-sale privileges enjoyed by Michigan vintners were extended to wineries in California, Oregon and Washington.

Vintners have kids, too!

The problem for legislators is that under last May's Supreme Court ruling in *Granholm v. Heald*, any restrictions on out-of-state wineries must be enforced equally against those in Michigan. So in-state wineries, most of which derive about a third of their sales from direct shipments to restaurants and consumers, have been screaming bloody murder.

Ward has said he would support a compromise that would permit a limited number of direct shipments a year, but Michigan winegrowers say the only compromise language they've heard would place unacceptable restrictions on consumer choice.

"We're not there yet," Frank Raha, an aide to Ward, conceded early Tuesday evening, raising the possibility that legislators may postpone a vote until next week to allow more time for negotiation.

But it's apparent the only children state lawmakers are worried about now live with wholesalers or winegrowers.

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[.com](http://freepress.com).

Caseworkers get new tool to increase efficiency

By Kathy Jessup

Journal correspondent

9/2/2005 11:00:00 AM

CENTREVILLE — Michigan Department of Human Services officials are hoping book-sized, mobile technology will help dozens of the state's adult protective services workers handle more cases with fewer workers.

New Hewlett Packard "Tablet" have been assigned to workers who investigate possible abuse and neglect of vulnerable adults. The tiny keyboard/screen combinations now allow workers to type client information — everything from name and address to the medications being taken — directly on state forms, then upload the information into the state's giant computer network when they return to their offices.

Julia Hughes, a St. Joseph County DHS adult services worker, demonstrated the technology to the county's Human Services Board Tuesday, showing trustees how a six-page, paper intake form now is loaded on the tiny tablets. Workers formerly brought paper forms with them to a client's home to fill in the necessary information by hand, then returned to their offices to input it on the DHS main computer system.

The new Tablets will reduce the process to a single step by eliminating the paper forms, allowing workers to type in the information at the client's home and link the Tablet with the DHS computer system when they return to the office. Not only can the mobile system be used for initial intakes, but Hughes said client information can be changed during the required six-month evaluations and annual case reviews.

"This should assist us with the time we spend on paperwork," said Hughes. "Right now we have been cut from three adult workers to two and at this point I'm looking for anything that can save me a little time. I probably spend two to two and a half days on the road each week visiting clients. Not only can I use it when I'm meeting with them, we can bring files along with us and use it in the time between appointments to do work."

Hughes estimated eliminating the need to manually input new client data or update a file can save her an average 30 minutes of duplicated work time per case.

The new tech tools also have the ability to store a history of a worker's contact with a client and include a medical dictionary so that workers can be more accurately record their clients' treatments, conditions and medications.

Not only can the new Tablet input data typed on the computer's keyboard, it also has limited capability to transform notes handwritten with a special stylus into typewritten text.

The technology was piloted in some Michigan counties before being released to adult services

workers statewide. According to Hughes, the two adult services workers in St. Joseph County and a pair in Cass County received their new technology about a month ago.

The new technology follows a trend at DHS that has cut the agency's clerical support staff as well. According to Chris Kadulski, Cass/St. Joseph DHS executive director, county offices once employed a pool of clerical people to handle data input. The new mobile technology now allows caseworkers to do that task directly as they interview clients.

Illegals denied help

1 in 4 Hispanics seeking public assistance can't verify citizenship

By Kathy Jessup

Journal correspondent

6/29/2005 8:45:00 PM

CENTREVILLE — One of every four Hispanics applying for public assistance in St. Joseph County is living in the United States illegally, according to a senior St. Joseph County Department of Human Services supervisor.

Jan Ferguson, a family independence manager and 24-year veteran of the St. Joseph County Department of Human Services office, said applicants who are unable to substantiate their U.S. citizenship or legal immigration are denied access to all but life-saving public assistance programs. But Ferguson told the county's Human Services Board Tuesday that DHS caseworkers are prohibited from contacting the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service to report suspected illegals.

"We're not allowed to contact INS if someone is questionable," Ferguson explained. "The INS has said it doesn't do any good anyway because they can't afford to send them (illegals) back."

While accurate statistics are not kept on the number of public assistance cases denied due to illegal residency, Ferguson estimated Tuesday that about

25 percent of Hispanics who come to the Centreville office to open a case are found to be living in the U.S. illegally. The supervisor said citizenship is routinely checked for Hispanic applicants who must provide a valid Social Security number, birth certificate or immigration green card to show they are in the U.S. legally.

Ferguson acknowledged Hispanic applicants who are unable to speak English may be scrutinized more closely to verify their resident status.

According to the program manager, local DHS offices have a direct link with the federal Social Security Administration, allowing them to routinely verify that Social Security numbers provided by applicants match the names on those SSA accounts.

Michigan denies welfare assistance to non-resident aliens, according to Chris Kadulski, director of Cass/St. Joseph Department of Human Services. However,

a person in the U.S. illegally may receive emergency medical benefits in a "life or death situation," Kadulski said.

According to 2000 federal Census data, 4 percent of St. Joseph County's population is identified as Hispanic, compared to

3.3 percent statewide. That makes Hispanics the county's largest ethnic group; African Americans made up 2.6 percent of St. Joseph County's population, according to 2000 Census data. In other business Tuesday, Kadulski said 15 current cases in St. Joseph County could be impacted by a Michigan House proposal to limit cash assistance to a maximum 48 months as one means of stemming what some have claimed is generational dependence on welfare.

Ferguson told trustees welfare reform measures that require some cash assistance applicants to either work, perform public service or participate in a job search program have discouraged some from applying.

"There are people who will tell you they simply don't want to work and they won't apply," Ferguson said. "We haven't found what it is that's going to motivate these people to go to work. We also have a lot of women who aren't getting their child support and they're looking for help.

Fewer and fewer people are receiving cash assistance but more are applying for Medicaid and food assistance."

St. Joseph County's cash assistance caseload was at its lowest level of the year in May at 1,405 cases, down 100 from the previous year. But the trend was reversed in Cass County where cash assistance clients are up 71 from 2004.

Both counties continued to show steady increases in the numbers of Medicaid clients for low-income health care benefits.

COX LIKELY TO APPEAL SBC ORDER

The official line, even from Attorney General Mike Cox himself, is that the Department of Attorney General is still reviewing an order deregulating local telephone prices for some of the more populated areas of the state. But he indicated in a recent interview with Gongwer News Service that the decision has been made and an appeal can be expected next week.

The deadline to appeal the order is September 6, and Mr. Cox said he is still reviewing both the order and previous court decisions.

"We're taking a really hard look at that," he said. "You do have to consider what are the chances at the Court of Appeals."

But a number of slips of the tongue while discussing the case changed the "if" of an appeal to the "when".

The slips did not uncover much of a secret. An appeal of the decision from at least that quarter was expected, especially given the department's arguments against SBC's request for the price deregulation.

There are, however, some issues to be considered in filing the appeal, Mr. Cox said. "The ILECs do have a good argument that the world's a lot different than it was 10 years ago," he said, referring to incumbent local exchange carriers like SBC and Verizon. "At the same time, the ILECs have had the advantage of the nuts and bolts paid by ratepayers."

The issues raised in deciding whether to appeal are the same being raised in the rewrite of the Michigan Telecommunications Act. But unlike the SBC case, Mr. Cox said that and the discussions of changes to the state's electric utility laws are not places he will get involved.

"Our first and main focus is to ensure that the same consumer protections remain with the act," he said of the MTA. Of the electric laws, he said, "Our office can't lead energy policy and we don't want to."

The loss of the SBC case is not keeping Mr. Cox away from the PSC. He said his office is also fighting proposed rate increases by Consumers Energy and is closely watching efforts by Detroit Edison to "de-skew" its rates.

The Consumers increases are of particular concern because they would be double what was recently granted to Edison. The utility is seeking a 16 percent increase in January when the rate cap for residential customers expires and another 6 percent base increase.

"We think that's way out of line," he said, noting that Edison was granted a 10 percent increase. "They both largely face the same kinds of union costs and labor costs and fuel costs," he said.

And he said any increases in utility rates would hurt considering residential rates are about 6 percent above those in neighboring states and industrial rates are about 10 percent higher. "Energy is a huge cost of doing business," he said of the industrial customers.

He was particularly critical of parts of the rate increases dedicated to alternative energy programs. "I think the PSC is making some bad moves in terms of subsidizing private, for-profit alternative energy companies," he said.

Mr. Cox admitted Edison residential customers could still face some rate increases as the utility works to de-skew its rates, removing the current subsidies that industrial and commercial customers pay to residential ratepayers.

Both Edison and Consumers have argued that, to be competitive in the new choice markets the state is working to develop, the rates for each customer class must cover the costs of providing power to those

customers. They said competitors can undercut their commercial and industrial prices because the utilities' rates for those classes have been held artificially high.

"That's going to happen," Mr. Cox said. "It's a matter of how it's done."

Another area where Mr. Cox said he is not likely to intervene much is in fuel prices. While he said he would be active in preventing gouging, he said there was little he could do about the base price. "The utility industry is a very regulated industry," he said. "Gas prices are a very open market."

But he said he would be expanding his work to protect residents, and the state, from health care fraud. "It's something we've been looking at growing," he said. "Just the demographics say that unit has to be more active going forward."

The demographics Mr. Cox references are the aging population ("In three years the start of 78 million Baby Boomers will hit 62") and the expected increase in health care need by that population, combined with estimates that as much as 10 percent of Medicaid and Medicare spending nationally is for fraudulent charges.

Expanding that or any other division in the department has been difficult with recent budget difficulties, he said. "Our office has shrunk even more than state government," he said.

Unlike prior years, though, Mr. Cox did not fault Governor Jennifer Granholm for his department's budget. "I think the governor was very fair with our us," he said. "Her proposal almost covered our employee economics."

The governor's recommendation would have given the department an additional \$1.6 million, of which the Senate removed most and the House removed all.

"In the price of government we ask that we be recognized for the value we add. We're the attorneys for a corporation that raises and spends \$40 billion," he said. "The demand for legal services is going up, but the funding has been dropping."

Among the value he said he has added, in addition to successful arguments reducing proposed utility price hikes and other consumer protections, is collections of child support. He said his department has successfully collected \$17.4 million and has cases in process to collect as much as \$80 million more.

He announced Thursday the result of a "summer sweep" that resulted in collection of \$222,991 for 34 children and arrest of 58 delinquent parents, including 22 in other states. Another 68 are still under investigation.

Though local Friend of the Court offices do most of the child support collections, Mr. Cox said, "We're the thunder and lightning that tells you it's raining."

And he said he is still trying to work out the right strength for that storm. "There are no models to follow," he said. "It's something we're going to have to right size over time."

He is also still working to expand the department's efforts in law enforcement. "The one thing that I want to do is fill the gap for local prosecutors," he said. "There are a number of situations where things can be sticky for local prosecutors."

Mr. Cox said all of his efforts should hold him in good stead as 2006 rolls around, though again he would not confirm a decision. "I'm probably going to run," he said.

He said he expects that his activities over the past three years, almost four by that time, will be a primary subject of the campaign on both sides. "I expect it's a referendum on the incumbent," he said. "If somebody wants to make consumer protection an issue, bring it on. ... If someone wants to attack me for adding child support or protection for seniors, bring it on."

Longtime shelter volunteer once sought refuge

Sandy Smith, 43

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, September 02, 2005

By Jeff Smith

jfsmith@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6328

FLINT - Sandy Smith knew firsthand what it was like to be without. That's why the mother of four volunteered at the Harvest House Shelter long after she found a place to call her own.

Smith, a woman who was willing to give of herself even when she had so little to give, died Sunday at her home. She was 43.

During Christmas, she gathered toys and clothing for kids at Harvest House whose families couldn't afford to provide gifts. And she was attempting to become a foster parent, said her niece, Tanya Addison.

Her dedication to those less fortunate was simply payback for her own previous misfortune. Years ago, Smith and her daughter, Ebony, found shelter at Harvest House.

Smith was also a faithful supporter of the St. Luke Catholic Church's clothing drive, where she would help out sorting items for distribution to the needy.

Smith's family believes she had a premonition of her death, because on Friday, she wrote letters to her sons, and on Saturday asked Ebony to mail them.

It was Ebony who discovered her mother's body in the kitchen Sunday, Addison said.

Smith succumbed to a heart condition she endured most of her adult life. Although she once worked as a nurse's aide, her health took its toll, eventually keeping her from work, Addison said.

While Smith sometimes grew weary of the routine she underwent to safeguard her health - she had undergone bypass surgery and had to take a daily regimen of pills - she was always there for Harvest House, said Clarissa Wiggins, director of the Flint shelter for homeless and abused women and children.

"She would come in, she would do anything from manning the telephones to mopping the floor," Wiggins said. "If there were residents that didn't have a chance to do laundry, she would do laundry for them."

Yet Smith did not seek or expect praise.

"Sandy was a meek and humble woman. She was our mothers' and our grandmothers' type of woman," Wiggins said.

During the five to six years she knew Smith, Wiggins couldn't recall an instance in which Smith lost her temper.

"I never, ever heard her raise her voice," she said. "(She) was a great lady."

The service for Smith was 11 a.m. today at Lawrence E. Moon Funeral Home, 906 W. Flint Park Blvd.

She also leaves three sons, Erick, Eddie and Edwin.

Building relationships

Program informs parents about schools and social services

By JOHN BURDICK Staff writer

Holland Sentinel

Friday, September 2, 2005

New parents and families with children moving into the Fennville area are now getting more informed about local schools and social services.

Fennville Public Schools launched a Welcoming Schools program that will start and build relationships with families with young children throughout the district.

"Our goal is to help connect them with Fennville Public Schools and to make them feel welcome and comfortable in our district," said Stacy Souders, coordinator of the program. "It's a great program."

Souders was hired to the part-time job in January. Her salary is covered by a grant from the Michigan Family Independence Agency that launched the program.

Souders' enthusiasm has helped the project get off to a good start, said Kathy Kirby, principal of Anna Michen Elementary School.

"She's created all of our primary materials and brochures," Kirby said. "The program provides new families with information about opportunities that the district and the county provide."

For example, parents receive information about services to families such as Parents as Teachers, Michigan School Readiness Preschool, Co-op Preschool and Head Start.

These programs provide a variety of services to children and parents. For example, some help children with developmental delays or disabilities while others let parents know about preschool options. Other programs provide information about parenting classes and let parents know how they can complete their high school education or earn their GED.

Blanca Garcia, 34, of Lee Township, recently met with Souders to get information on programs for her 3-year-old daughter. She plans to enroll her daughter in a Head Start program next year.

"Stacy was wonderful," Garcia said. "She really knows how to explain all the information. My girl is very active -- she needs something."

Souders spent the first five months creating the brochures and making contacts.

Since July, she's contacted 113 families. First she sends a postcard, then, about a week later, follows up with a letter introducing herself. She also schedules appointments to visit parents at their homes.

Souders, 23, is a native of Fennville and a graduate of Fennville High School. She received a degree in sociology from Grand Valley State University. Her parents are teachers at Anna Michen Elementary.

For more information, contact Souders at (269) 561-7231 or by e-mail at Ssouders@Fennville.org.

Contact John Burdick at john.burdick@hollandsentinel.com or (616) 546-4275.

WELCOME: Stacy Souders, Welcoming Schools coordinator for Fennville Public Schools displays a selection of information she has available for parents.



A few good men(tors)

Cass agency focuses on increasing volunteers

By D.L. PERRIN
Tribune Correspondent

Pam Swain is looking for a few good men.

No, she isn't a Marine recruiter; she is the director of the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District's Family Resource Center. Her agency deals with a multitude of family issues centering on child development and family education.

In her job she interacts with all the human services organizations within Cass County. There is one familiar theme running through both the agencies and the school system: They need volunteers.

"I attend many agency meetings, and they all need more volunteers, particularly male volunteers," Swain explained at a recent recruitment picnic.

"I began the REACH program to address the problem," she said. REACH is an acronym for Resource Efforts to Affirm Children's Hope. Her first effort at recruitment was a family-oriented day of fun, food and games hosted by YMCA Camp Eberhart and various county agencies.

All families and individuals from Cass County were invited to spend an afternoon of free activities including swimming, picnicking, playing games and enjoying water sports while they learned about the different volunteer opportunities in Cass County.

"Volunteering and mentoring doesn't mean only spending a certain amount of hours helping a child do homework," Swain said. "It is so much more, and there is such a wide variety of ways to help the children."

Swain said people might want to help but often don't have the time, ability or temperament to work directly with a child. She can help them find the happy medium.

Swain said individuals who want to give something back but can't be "hands-on" can affect a child's life in a positive way by donating money for a scholarship to help needy children finance intramural activities, a camp experience or a field trip. Those are examples of the little extras for which low-income or single-parent families just don't have the discretionary income.

Volunteering might be something as simple as offering to pick up a child after school and dropping that child at home. Perhaps the parents have to work that night and the child would have to skip the after-school opportunity because he or she had to take the school bus home.

Jason Bender and Tamara Faber, of Marcellus, came to the REACH event after seeing the flier at the local library. They brought along their 7-year-old daughter, Kaitlin. They were enjoying a picnic on the lawn under a shade tree. Jason was busy trying to get a bee out of Kaitlin's baked beans. It was a perfect family afternoon.

"I understand how some families need help for their kids," Faber said. "My niece has been in foster care. We only get to see her occasionally. Everybody does need somebody who cares. Jason would be a good mentor. He is great with kids -- always joking around. When there are kids around, they are usually around him."

On the other end of the scale was Bob Brooks from Portage. Bob is a caseworker for Cass County Wrap Around. His organization takes on at-risk children in broken homes. They intervene before the situation requires the children be removed.

Brooks attended the REACH event with two of his charges and his 5-year-old son, Steven.

He was there to explain to potential volunteers what kind of work he does and where they might help. He and the children had a great afternoon of eating and enjoying the lake. The two brothers spoke well of Brooks and how he had affected their lives.

The teens, Reginald, 14, and Arthur, 13, live in Cassopolis. There is no mother in their home, and their father is dying of cancer. Their lives were on a downward spiral, so Brooks' services were needed.

Brooks set up a system similar to the television show "Nanny 911" with household rules and guidelines such as curfew, bedtime, mealtime and being ready for the school bus when it arrived. Reginald said he appreciated Brooks' direction. "I liked it. He helped me focus and taught me to set goals like being on time for things."

Both boys agreed the best time of their lives was going to summer camp for two weeks. Brooks had found a scholarship "mentor" to pay the boys' fees. Their eyes lit up as they listed all of the activities and new things they learned at camp. A major lesson for them was teamwork and depending upon each other, they said.

"We have done other things out in the community like going shopping for groceries," Arthur recalled with a sense of pride. "We went shopping; brought the food home, and we cooked the whole meal. I made the spaghetti, and Reg made the salad."

**Cass County Council on Aging (269)
445-8110**

**Cass County Department of Human
Services/Foster Care (269) 445-0285**

**Cass County Earned Income Tax
Coalition (269) 445-6282**

**Court Appointed Special (child)
Advocate (269) 445-4431**

**Helping Hands of Cass County (269)
445-8104**

**Minority Coalition of Cass County
(269) 476-2242**

Police Athletic League (269) 782-5825

**Lewis/Cass ISD Respite and
Resource (269) 445-6222**

**Volunteer Center of Southwest
Michigan (269) 983-0912**

**Youth Club of Cass County (269) 445-
1601**

To help

Anyone wishing to find out which agencies need volunteers or help may contact Pam Swain at the Family Resource Center, 61682 Dailey Road, Cassopolis, MI 49031 or call (269) 445-6282.

Besides churches, conservation clubs, schools, civic and service clubs, scouts, the Salvation Army and the Red Cross, here is a partial list of volunteering opportunities in Cass County:

Area Agency on Aging (269) 983-7058

B.R.C. Mentoring (269) 445-4456

**Big Brothers and Sisters of
Berrien/Cass (269) 684-1100**

POOREST CITY: Detroit can now shine a generous light

September 2, 2005

Detroit Free Press Opinion

Detroit got another depressing designation this week when it was crowned the poorest city in America. But bet on the Motor City not to wallow in the reality that a third of residents live below the federal poverty level of \$19,157 for a family of four.

Indeed it would be a triumph to remind the nation, in the midst of its worst natural disaster, of Detroiters' great generosity. This is the most charitable city in America. For all its entrenched poverty, the people of Detroit still manage to give away 12.1% of their discretionary income annually, beating even New York City, according to the Chronicle of Philanthropy.

Outsiders may scoff at the possibility that Detroit could take a leading role in helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina. But people around here know their history. Detroiters are great givers who respond big in times of need, regardless of their own crises. The poorest city in the United States should -- and will -- look south and lend a hand. Because everyone in the nation has a part to play in rebuilding America's Gulf Coast.

If Detroiters can't do anything but cobble together bundles of pennies for the Red Cross, it will count to Katrina's stranded and stressed victims.

No doubt, the burdens here are huge. Nearly half of Detroit children 17 and under lived in poor homes in 2004. But people with open hearts can see how much worse life could be in the floodwaters of Louisiana and Mississippi. There, children have no homes, no schools and, by many of the pictures, little reason to hope basic amenities will return, at least not any time soon.

Detroit's benevolence alone cannot repair all that Katrina's destroyed. Whatever contribution the city musters may not change the world's image of Motown. That's not the point.

Poor as Detroit may be, this city knows too much about giving not to stand up and be part of the solution in this moment of suffering.

Sep 2, 8:43 AM EDT

Unemployment Rate Declines to 4-Year Low

By JEANNINE AVERSA
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The nation's unemployment rate dipped to a four-year low of 4.9 percent in August as companies added 169,000 jobs, a sign that the labor market continued to gain traction before Hurricane Katrina struck.

The latest snapshot of the United States' jobs climate, released by the Labor Department on Friday, buttressed observations by Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and his colleagues that the hiring situation was gradually improving - a bit of good news for workers as they headed into the Labor Day weekend.

But the future of the nation's employment picture is murky - clouded by fallout from the devastating hurricane.

Friday's figures don't reflect the impact of Katrina, which slammed into New Orleans and a swath of Gulf Coast communities, because the employment information was collected before the storm hit.

The 4.9 percent unemployment rate reported for August was down a notch from July's 5 percent rate and was the lowest since August 2001.

President Bush, whose job approval ratings have been sinking in recent polls, has been confronted by new economic challenges from Hurricane Katrina, which has catapulted lofty gasoline and other energy prices even higher.

Many economists believe the hurricane's fallout will slow overall economic growth in the months ahead as higher energy prices crimp consumers' and businesses' appetite to spend. Some believe growth in the final quarter of this year could come in at an anemic pace of around 2 percent.

Such a scenario could make businesses more cautious in their hiring, which could raise the nation's unemployment rate.

Against the backdrop of economic uncertainty created by the hurricane and skyrocketing energy prices, a few economists believe the Federal Reserve may decide to hold interest rates steady at its next meeting on Sept. 20. Others, however, continue to predict another quarter-point rate increase.

In Friday's report, U.S. employers added 169,000 jobs in August, reflecting increased employment in industries, including construction, professional and business services, health care and education, and financial activities. But manufacturers shed jobs for the third straight month, reflecting the industry's sometimes bumpy road to recovery from the 2001 recession.

Also encouraging was that payroll gains were revised up for both June and July. Employers in July added 242,000 jobs, an improvement from the government's initial estimate of 207,000 net job gains. For June, 175,000 jobs were added, up from a previous estimate of a 166,000 jobs gain.

The payroll gain of 169,000 reported for August was less than the 190,000 new jobs some economists were forecasting before the release of the report. Economists were predicting the unemployment would hold steady at July's 5 percent rate.

Professional and business services added 29,000 jobs in August. Financial companies added 15,000. Education and health services expanded employment by 43,000. Leisure and hospitality added 34,000 jobs. Retailers added close to 12,000 during the month. Construction companies boosted payrolls by 25,000.

But factories cut another 14,000 jobs in August. Auto makers accounted for the biggest chunk of those job losses.

The labor market is the one part of the economy that has had difficulty getting back to full throttle after the 2001 recession.

Jobseekers still face challenges. The report showed that the average time that the unemployed spent searching for work in August was 18.9 weeks, up from 17.6 weeks in July.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 2, 2005

Governor Announces Statewide Resource Coordination Effort, Michigan Hurricane Helpline, and Statewide “Michigan Cares/Michigan Gives On-Air Fund Raising Drive

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm this morning outlined Michigan’s relief efforts to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina and announced new efforts to funnel goods and services to affected communities.

From the State’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Granholm urged citizens to visit the state’s Website at www.michigan.gov for up-to-date information on how to donate goods, services and money to the relief effort. Granholm announced a new Michigan Hurricane Helpline for citizens to pledge donations of goods and services and offer help. Pledges of help will be cataloged and coordinated so that when the affected areas ask for particular assistance, the state can deliver immediately. The Michigan Hurricane Helpline number is 1-888-535-6136.

“Citizens can help right now by calling our new Hurricane Helpline to report your group’s activities, to volunteer your willingness to donate goods, services and housing,” said Granholm. “If you have a cash contribution – which is so critical at this moment – please visit www.michigan.gov to donate to one of the relief organizations listed.”

Granholm said the state’s EOC is coordinating all relief efforts underway in the state and is marshalling resources – from State of Michigan departments, private entities, private citizens, and local organizations – to ensure that Michigan support is coordinated and ready at a moment’s notice to be delivered in the most impactful way to the affected areas. The State is also working to ensure that Michigan citizens and businesses are protected from the economic impacts of the Hurricane.

The Governor announced earlier this week that she has suspended rules that restricted transportation of gasoline in Michigan. The Governor has also asked Marathon Oil to lower its wholesale prices. The State has received more than 1,500 complaints regarding gas gouging. The Attorney General’s office is investigating.

Granholm also announced that she is coordinating an on-air fundraiser next week for victims of the hurricane. She has partnered with Michigan Association of Broadcasters to reach out to organize a statewide, simultaneous on-air fundraiser to support Hurricane Katrina efforts.

“All across our state, next Friday, September 9, radio and television broadcasters, commercial and public, will take part in Michigan Cares/Michigan Gives.”

This effort will involve on-air fundraising throughout the day with a particular focus on the 6-9 a.m. morning drive time. Broadcasters will ask their listeners to call the Red Cross' relief hotline to donate funds. While the Michigan Cares/Michigan Gives fundraising effort will culminate in on-air activities next Friday, citizens can call and donate now.

Granholtz has been briefed on numerous activities initiated by Michigan nonprofit organizations, churches, and businesses, and she pledged to support those activities. "We are all moved by the outpouring of support by Michigan citizens and organizations. Outreach efforts like the one coordinated by the Legislative Black Caucus and efforts by local citizens to open Michigan's arms to evacuees are true examples of the spirit of Michigan."

Granholtz said that her office is supporting efforts like those announced by radio-host Tom Joyner to coordinate "adopt-a-family" networks through churches around the state. Her office of Community and Faith Based Initiatives is working closely with religious leaders around the state to coordinate help and to dedicate a portion of their weekend services to remembering our brothers and sisters who are suffering. "There is one more way that citizens can help right now," said Granholtz. "Say a prayer for the families, the children, the parents, the volunteers who need to know we are thinking of them and sending our thoughts to them."

Granholtz detailed actions underway in state departments to provide badly needed relief and to prepare for the potential arrival of disaster victims to the state. State efforts are being organized into five key areas:

Security and Logistics Support

- As commander of the Michigan National Guard, the Governor deployed nearly 500 soldiers. Military Police are en route to Mississippi. The Michigan National Guard has dispatched a water purification unit. Two C-130 transport aircraft have been dispatched and two are on call. The National Guard trucking companies are on alert as well. Michigan State Police has K-9, SWAT, and Forensics teams ready to deploy.

Housing Support

- Available housing options are being catalogued through Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS is currently ensuring that housing is available for evacuees who have already arrived in Michigan. DHS is working closely with the faith community as well to identify housing and services.

Health, Human Services and Education Support

- Health and human services and education services are being coordinated to ensure that children can be accepted into schools and that citizens have access to services.
- Department of Community Health is coordinating with the Michigan Hospital Association to identify volunteer medical and nursing personnel and is preparing for possible immunization issues. The Department of Human Services will expedite food

assistance/food stamp rules for evacuees. DCH is also delivering the message that the state will honor any out-of-state Medicaid cards.

Transportation Support

- Department of Transportation is marshalling transportation services. An MDOT bridge repair rig is ready to mobilize. All charter bus companies in the state have been, or will be, contacted to determine capacity. The Department of Education is working with local school districts to catalogue excess school bus capacity. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has four C-130 aircraft prepared to mobilize to move evacuees.

Environmental Cleanup/Protection

- Department of Environmental Quality is mobilizing 50 conservation officers with law enforcement capabilities and inventorying surplus equipment such as boots and waders. The Department of Agriculture is identifying veterinarians to assist with animal disease issues.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1, 2005

Governor Granholm Makes Appointments, Reappointments

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced the following appointments and reappointments to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board, State Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board, State Construction Code Commission, and Electrical Administrative Board:

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board

Steven K. Hamp of Ann Arbor, president and secretary of The Henry Ford. Mr. Hamp is reappointed to represent the general public for a term expiring October 1, 2009. He was previously appointed in January of this year to replace David Dempsey, who resigned. The Natural Resources Trust Fund Board is responsible for the acquisition of lands for resource protection and public outdoor recreation. The board determines which lands, and rights in land within the state, should be acquired and which public recreation facilities should be developed with money from the trust fund. The board submits to the Legislature in January of each year a list of those lands, rights in land, and public recreation facilities that the board has determined should be acquired or developed with trust fund money.

State Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

Abby B. Dart of Harbor Springs, program director of Scenic Michigan in Petoskey. Ms. Dart is appointed to represent parents for a term expiring December 19, 2007. She succeeds Jenna Marr whose term has expired.

Paul N. Shaheen of Bath, executive director of the Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health. Mr. Shaheen is appointed to present professional providers of child abuse and neglect prevention services for a term expiring December 19, 2007. He succeeds Christine Nelson whose term has expired.

Scott M. Stevenson of Haslett, president of Telecommunications Association of Michigan. Mr. Stevenson is appointed to represent volunteers in child abuse and neglect prevention services for a term expiring December 19, 2007. He succeeds Michael Bouchard whose term has expired.

Bishop Nathaniel W. Wells of Muskegon, bishop with Holy Trinity Institutional Church of God in Christ. Bishop Wells is appointed to represent the religious community for a term expiring December 19, 2007. He succeeds Ira Combs, Jr. whose term has expired. The State Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board, also known as the Children's Trust Fund, is responsible for developing a plan to distribute funds to statewide education programs that work to develop awareness of child abuse and neglect.

State Construction Code Commission

Dawn M. Holtrop of Grand Rapids, owner of DMH Architecture. Ms. Holtrop is appointed to represent architects for a term expiring January 31, 2007. She succeeds Cheryl A. Whitton-Kaszubski whose term has expired.

The State Construction Code Commission prepares and promulgates the state construction code that governs the construction, use, and occupation of buildings and structures. The commission is also charged with adding, amending and rescinding rules to update the code at least every three years in order to coincide with the national code change cycle.

Electrical Administrative Board

David L. Bushouse of Kalamazoo, president of Bushouse Inspection Services. Mr. Bushouse is reappointed to represent insurance inspection bureaus for a term expiring August 10, 2008.

Thelma P. Dobson of Farmington Hills, supervisor of meter services engineering for DTE Energy. Ms. Dobson is reappointed to represent electrical energy supply agencies for a term expiring August 10, 2008.

William (Frank) Donovan of Jackson, electrical inspector for the city of Jackson. Mr. Donovan is reappointed to represent chief electrical inspectors of municipalities for a term expiring August 10, 2008.

The Electrical Administrative Board inspects wiring and its installation, establishes fees for inspection, and appoints inspectors.

These appointments and reappointments are subject to Articles V, Section 6 of the Michigan State Constitution of 1963. They stand confirmed unless disapproved by the Senate within 60 days.

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